

Cowboy churches 'fan the flame' of evangelism

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MESQUITE—Leaders from cowboy churches across the state gathered at the Mesquite Rodeo Arena for inspiration, information and fellowship meant to spur them to share the gospel when they returned home.

Some of them didn't wait that long.



Fiddler Paul

Schlessinger from Milam County Cowboy Church of Rockdale performs at the Fan the Flame Evangelism Conference for western-heritage churches. (PHOTO/John Hall/BGCT) While the Baptist General Convention of Texas-sponsored [Fan the Flame Evangelism Conference](#) for Texas cowboy churches still was going on, some participants already were sharing their faith with arena concession workers. Later in the conference, an altar call led to some people entering a relationship with Jesus.

That's precisely what Charles Higgs, BGCT director of western-heritage ministries, hoped to see as a result of the gathering—more people coming to faith in Christ.

"I just really think that every church that comes here will go back with their batteries charged, they'll be renewed for evangelism, and God will do something unusual in their church," Higgs said.

About 500 people attended the event, which featured cowboy church pastors sharing their thoughts on evangelism, cowboy church bands leading worship, a pastors' luncheon and a time for pastors' wives, as well as preaching by O.S. Hawkins, president of [GuideStone Financial Services](#).

Cowboy churches play a key role in reaching Texas with the gospel, Higgs said. Conference organizers particularly focused on the need to start more cowboy congregations, as well as holding more arena events.

"Where there's hoof prints, there's baptisms," he said. "We want all our churches to reach out."

The western-heritage culture continues to gain popularity throughout the state, and that means more churches and more intentional outreach to cowboys are needed to spread the gospel as quickly as possible, he said.

The conference is made possible by a partnership between Texas Baptists' western-heritage ministries, the BGCT evangelism team and [Woman's Missionary Union of Texas](#). It is supported financially by gifts to missions through the Texas Baptist Cooperative Program and by funds from the [Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions](#).

"It's really important, because we talk about people groups all over the world, and yet the cowboy western-heritage culture is a people group, and so many in this people group are not reached with the gospel," said Carolyn Porterfield, multicultural consultant with Texas WMU. "It's hard to believe

that here in Texas people could live here all their lives and never darken the door of a church.”